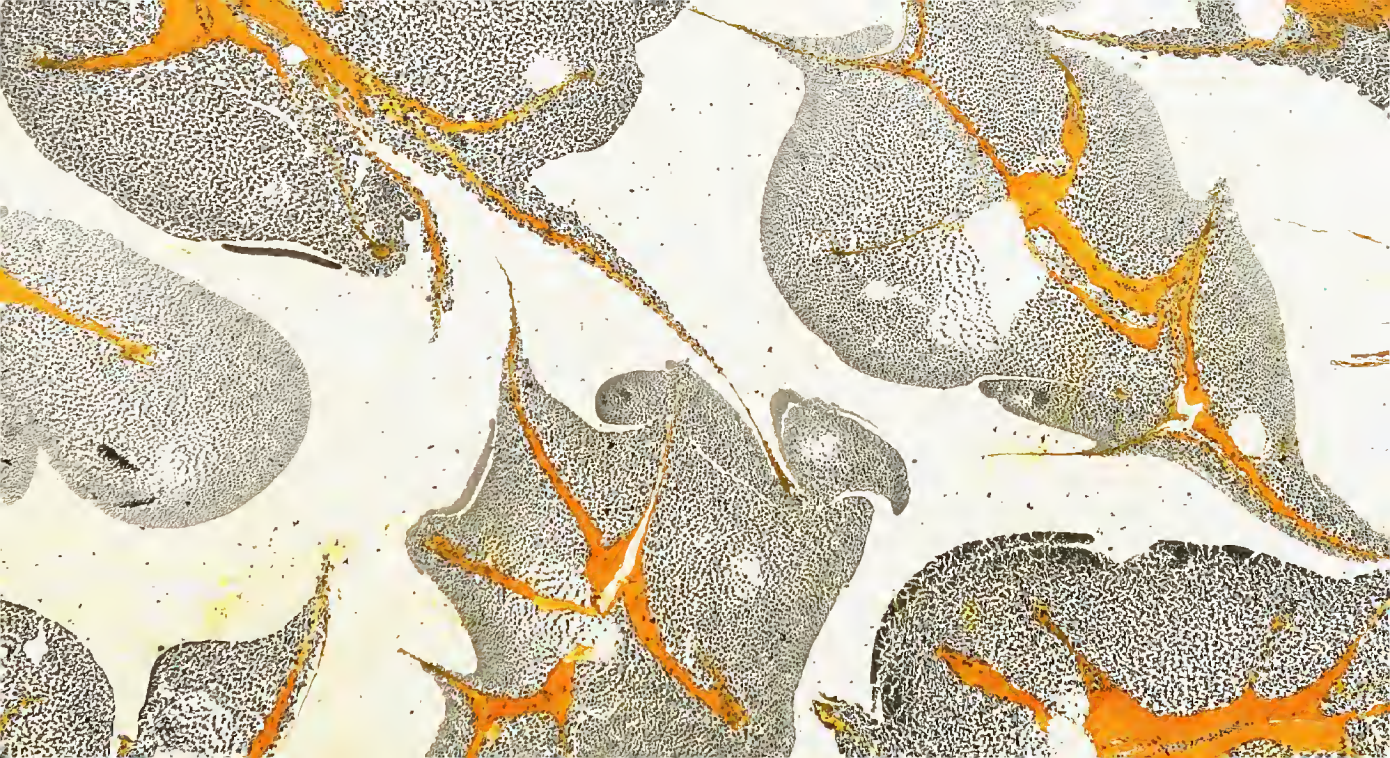

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SERMON

Preached in the

CATHEDRAL-CHURCH

OF

EXETER,

ON THE

GENERAL FAST-DAY,

February 6, 1756.

By the Lord Biſhop of EXETER.

Publiſhed at the Requeſt of the Rt. Worſhipful the MAYOR, and CHAMBER.

The SECOND EDITION.

LONDON:

Printed for E. SCORE, and B. THORN, Booksellers, in *Exeter*; and J. KNAPTON, C. HITCH and L. HAWES, P. DAVEY and B. LAW, Booksellers, in *London*. [Price Six-pence.]

To the Right Worſhipful the

Mayor, and *Chamber*

OF THE

CITY and COUNTY

OF

E X O N.

GENTLEMEN,

AS you have made it your unanimous *Requeſt* that the following *Sermon* ſhould be *Printed*, becauſe you are *fully ſatisfied that it will be of great and general Benefit to the Public*; I think it my *Duty* to ſubmit: And for that Reaſon, were there no other, I ought to look upon your *Requeſt* as improved into a *Command*.

However unequal ſuch an *imperfect Diſcourſe* may be to anſwer your *Expectations*; yet if it contri-

bute in any Meaſure to ſo *good* a Purpoſe; if it promote the Benefit of the *Community*, the *City*, or *Private* Perſons, at this *Important Juncture*;—you have an undoubted Title to a full Share of that mutual *Satisfaction* which will accrue to you, and to my ſelf.

I have an additional Reaſon for this *Addreſs*; becauſe it affords me an Opportunity of teſtifying my *Reſpects*; and acknowledging the conſtant Courſe of *Civilities*, which I have received from you.

I am,

GENTLEMEN,

Your moſt Obliged

and Obedient Servant,

G. EXON.

PSALM xlvi. 8.

Come, behold the Works of the Lord, *what Deſolations he hath made in the Earth.*

FROM the Contents of this *Pſalm* we may rationally judge, that it was compoſed on the double Account of ſome terrible *Earthquake*, and ſome conſuming *War*. Under which Calamities the Nation could have no Security, no Hope, but from the Divine Protection. And their Truſt in that was All-ſufficient.

God is our Refuge and Strength, a very preſent Help in Trouble. Therefore will we not fear, though the Earth be removed, and though the Mountains be carried into the Heart of the Sea: though the Waters thereof roar, and the Mountains ſhake with

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the Swelling thereof. For however the boiſterous Element may rage, to whatever Degree of Noiſe and Turbulency it may riſe; *there is a River*, (of a more pure and gentle Nature) *the Streams whereof ſhall make glad the City of God, the Holy Place of the Tabernacle of the moſt High.* This was literally the Caſe of the *Old Jeruſalem*; where *the Waters of* Siloam, *which go ſoftly* (Iſai. viii. 6.) refreſhed the City and Sanctuary; and flowing from the Root of *Mount Sion* afforded the Conſolation of *God's being well known there as a ſure Refuge.* Accordingly in the *New Jeruſalem*, whereof the former was an *Emblem*, when the *Myſtery of God is finiſhed*, *The Angel* (ſaith *St. John*, Rev. xxii. 1.) *ſhewed me a pure River of the Water of Life, clear as Cryſtal, proceeding out of the Throne of God and of the Lamb.* The *Pſalmiſt* goes on, *God is in the Midſt of her; ſhe ſhall not be moved.* Indeed *the Heathen raged, and the Kingdoms were moved: Idolatrous* Nations made *the Houſe of* David the Object of their Fury. But *God uttered his Voice, and the Earth melted.*

ted. The *Earthquake* was ſufficient to have checked the Rage of their Enemies *Armies*; and yet neither of them to be feared; for, he addeth, *The Lord of Hoſts is with us, the God of* Jacob *is our Refuge.*

Then ſummoning the People together, he bids them take a View of the Ravages which Heaven had inflicted on the World, and conſider what Uſes were to be made of ſuch terrible Calamities. *Come, behold the Works of the Lord, what Deſolations he hath made in the Earth.*

This may ſerve as a proper *Introduction* to our ſerious Obſervance of the *ſolemn Humiliation* of this Day; — ſet apart by Authority (in Conformity with God and Nature) " for imploring a Bleſſing on His " Majeſty's Fleets and Armies, in this im- " portant Situation of Public Affairs; — " as alſo for the Humbling of our ſelves " before God, in a deep Senſe of his late " Viſitation, by a moſt dreadful and ex- " tenſive Earthquake."

'Tis

'Tis Matter of melancholy Conſideration, and Proof of our Indiſcretion and Injuſtice, that the *Common and Regular* Diſpenſation of Providence, in the Preſervation of the World and its Inhabitants, ſhould not ſuffice for keeping alive in our Minds a conſtant Senſe of its Maker and Preſerver, a due Acknowledgment of his Power and Goodneſs; and that ſome *uncommon* Event alone, Nature as it were diſordered and out of Courſe, ſhould draw our Eyes and Attention upwards. But ſo it is; the regular Influences of the Heavens, and Productions of the Earth (which ought to be regarded as a *continual Miracle)* have but too ſlight an Effect upon our dull and groſs Apprehenſions. How careleſly do we riſe, and eat, and lie down? How unattentive are we to this ſedate and perpetual Harmony, this continual Revolution of Bleſſings? As if it were *only* a Thing of Courſe, and we are tired with the Continuance and Care of *Common Providence.* Nature muſt be in a Tumult, and Storm; ſomething *extraordinary*, and uncommonly loud, muſt awake us, in order

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to create a reverential Awe towards the Supreme Being, and ſtir up our religious Sentiments and Affections.

Nay, the Bleſſings of Affluence and Peace do not merely ſteal away our Regard, but are apt fatally to *corrupt our Morals*, to infect us with Pride, Luxury, Intemperance, immoderate Love of Pleaſure, Profaneneſs, and Contempt of God's Word and Commandments. So that nothing but ſome ſurpriſing Interpoſition of Heaven, ſome violent and formidable Stroke, will be of Force enough to humble and reform us. We muſt be *diſturb'd into Devotion*; and *Confuſion* alone can bring us into *Order*.

'Tis manifeſt, and out of Queſtion, that ſomething has long been wanted for fixing the Heart of Man in a ſerious and devout Frame, and producing a real Senſe of his *religious Obligations*, a reverential Eſteem of Things Sacred. And that *All-wiſe Being*, who beſt knoweth how to ſuit the Means to the End, and apply dif-

ferent Arguments to different Perſons, hath lately called the World by an awakening Alarm, by a moſt dreadful and extenſive *Earthquake*; to try what *feeling* will do, and whether Diſtreſs will not bring the *Prodigal home to his Father*.

And a *Diſtreſs* an *Earthquake* is of the moſt *formidable* Nature. When Heaven giveth it a Licenſe to range, it knows no Diſtinction: But Prince, Prieſt, and People; Palaces, Churches, and Cottages, are ſwept away with promiſcuous Deſolation. — It is a *clandeſtine Battery*, not to be foreſeen, prevented, or avoided. Suddenly, and without Notice, the Earth opens its Mouth; caſting forth the Dead, and ſwallowing up the Living. — It bereaves the Sufferers of the common Aſſiſtance of Friends and Relations; the natural Duty of Self-preſervation driving them at a Diſtance: Or if they come to our Aſſiſtance perhaps the Wages of their Service is Death, and they are cruſhed in the pious Act. —— Wide and diffuſive is its Rage, ſeizing on Families, Cities, and Provinces: And,

And, big with Implements of Deſtruction, it *travelleth from one Nation to another, from one Kingdom to another People:* And there is no arreſting it in its Progreſs.

As to the *natural Cauſes* of ſuch Shocks and Convulſions, we may leave it to *Philoſophers*, either to explain, or to puzzle, our Inquiries. Probable Conjectures and Reaſons may be formed; attended, however, with many Uncertainties and Defects: But a perfect Knowledge lies too deep for human Reſearches. And we may reſt ſatisfied, that an *Earthquake*, in its *Cauſes*, is a *Peſtilence that walketh in Darkneſs*, while in its *Effects it deſtroyeth at Noon-day.*

Much leſs can the utmoſt Stretch of Reaſon determine,—in what *Degree* Preparations for Ruin are ſtored up in Nature, what Trains are laid for Execution, and in what Order they lye, in the Depth of the Seas, in the Heavens above, or in the Earth beneath; — at what Time, and in what Places, any Eruption or Convulſion

ſhall break forth; how, or where, it ſhall begin or end. —— Much leſs ſtill can the united Abilities of Mankind find a *Remedy* againſt an Earthquake, or ſtop its March, or direct its Motions.

From theſe Uncertainties and Obſcurities we have a plain Leſſon, to turn our Eyes and Thoughts upwards; and, overlooking Second Cauſes, to fear and adore the *Firſt Efficient Cauſe*, the Maker and Mover of the World; who, for wiſe Purpoſes, *hath created theſe Waſters to deſtroy*. It was the Will of the *Almighty*, who laid the Foundations of the Earth, to compoſe it of ſuch Materials, as ſhould either conſume it in Parcels, or at his appointed Time bring on its total Diſſolution. In the mean while, we muſt allow his *Prerogative* to know, and to prescribe, in what Manner and Meaſure, in what Countries and Kingdoms, and at what particular Seaſons, his Inſtruments and Preparations ſhall exert their Strength: Who, for righteous Reaſons, will let looſe and increaſe them; or ſuſpend, diminiſh, or annul, their

their Operations. All reſteth in the Breaſt of Providence. *It is Thou, Lord, and Thou only, that canſt make us to dwell in Safety.*

For a *Motive* to ſuch a firm Dependence on whom alone we can depend, *Come, and ſee what Deſolations he hath made in the Earth:* How (as it were but of Yeſterday, and before your Eyes) *he hath made a Way to his Indignation*; and what Devaſtations have enſued, when he *ariſeth to ſhake terribly the Earth.*

Terrible Things hath he ſhewn in his Righteouſneſs, and made the uttermoſt Parts of the World afraid at his Tokens; by a more *extenſive Earthquake* than probably was ever yet known; as if Sea and Land were in a Combination to deſtroy the whole Race of Mankind.

Beſides Accounts continually arriving, like *Job*'s Meſſengers one after another, of diverſe and diſtant Cities cruſhed, or ſwallowed up, with Thouſands and ten Thouſands

ſands of their Inhabitants buried alive in the Ruins; — what a Spectacle have we both of *Terror* and *Compaſſion*, in the utter Waſte and Deſolation of ſo many Towns and Cities in a neighbouring and well-known *Kingdom?* How, eſpecially, is her *Mother-City* laid waſte; ſhe, who like antient *Tyre, had the Harveſt of the River for her Revenue, and was the Mart of Nations!* How is the City of Renown fallen, —the Rich, the Populous,—the Centre of the Commerce of the World; — and, I fear too, the Centre of its worſt *Vices*;— certainly of *Idolatry*, and, its uſual Companion, *Perſecution!*

And ſhall ſuch Diſtreſſes afford no Warning to our own Country? Shall the Ocean ſwell, and Mountains ſhake; ſhall we look upon the mangled Carcaſſes of ſo many Cities, upon Deſolation all around us, and we ourſelves ſit unconcerned, wrapped up in ſtupid Security? Sure I am the *Sins* of the Nation lye heavy enough upon it to ſink it into the Earth; are *a Millſtone about our Necks, ſufficient to drown*

drown us in the Depth of the Sea. And unleſs this heavy Weight, this Load of Iniquity, be removed, there is nothing, in Nature, in Reaſon, or Divine Juſtice, to convince us that our own Danger is over; or that *the Shaking of the Earth once more* may not prove fatal to our own Country. *Except we repent we may all likewiſe periſh.* The Voice of the Lord in the *Earthquake* ſpeaks loud enough, ſpeaks intelligibly enough, ſpeaks cloſely enough, —*to open our Ears to Diſcipline*; to make us *hear, and fear, and deal no more preſumptuouſly*; to call in, and command, every Wanderer to his Duty, and the Service of his Maker.

But there is *another Voice*, which ſpeaks more *peculiarly* and more directly to this Nation; I mean the Sound of a dangerous and deſtructive *War*. And a *War* is big with too many Evils, not to call us to a ſtill deeper Senſe of Sorrow and *Humiliation*. However *juſt* may be our *Cauſe*, or *proſperous the Event*; ſtill it produceth ſuch Ravages and Plunderings, Ruin of Families

lies and Cities, painful and dangerous Wounds, Loſs of Life or Limb; ſo many Barbarities, and ſuch a prodigal Waſte of Human Blood,—as muſt make all, who have any Feeling of Humanity, lament ſuch a cruel Neceſſity, and ſuch dreadful Conſequences. Nor ought our Apprehenſions to ſubſide, while the Safety of the *Cammunity* (in which every Individual is involved) hangs in Suſpence, and the Fate of the Nation is at Stake:—While we are dealing with our iveterate Enemy, the common Diſturber of *Europe*, *that bitter and haſty Nation*; that imperious and perfidious Nation, ever watching for our Ruin; and which hath long been *heating their Furnace ſeven Times hotter* with the Fuel of Diſappointment and Revenge. *Heaven* preſerve us from their Malice! For, dreadful even as the *Peſtilence* was, *David* made it his *Choice*, rather than fly before the Sword of a victorious Enemy: *Becauſe it was falling into the Hands of God, and not into the Hands of Men.*

Thus have we farther Conviction, that *this*

this World is not the Place of our Reſt. Even while the Earth is opening, for Multitudes, Multitudes, to deſcend into it; all the miſchievous Engines of *War* are preparing for *Self-murder*, for Man to deſtroy himſelf. As if the Wrath of Heaven, and the Raging of the Land and Sea, were to be appeaſed by the Blood of *Human Sacrifices* : — Or rather, as if *Ambition* were taken for its Pattern thoſe *unnatural Wretches*, who ſet Fire with their own Hands to the miſerable Remainders of ruin'd Cities; who plunder, and murder, what the Mercy of *Earthquakes* had ſpared.

Here lyeth our Hope and Defence, that *War* is not permitted to range without Control, nor is able to exceed the Bounds of its Commiſſion from on High. He, who hath *the Hearts of Kings in his Hand*, can eaſily diſpoſe them either to hold forth the Olive-branch of *Peace*, or to make mutual Havock of their Subjects and Dominions; may either infatuate and confound their Devices, or crown them

with Succeſs. To his Righteous Sentence therefore muſt we appeal. Nor can we entertain any well-grounded Hopes of Succeſs, unleſs we engage Heaven on our Side. And how ſhall we engage that, without fervent Supplication, and a Religious Demeanour? Without the *Divine Benediction* the moſt vigorous Preparations, and beſt concerted Meaſures, are but *loſt Labour*.

But whatever be the Event of *War*;—our Lives, our Habitations, our Earth, ſtand upon too looſe and rotten a Foundation to admit of *Preſumption*. And while we have Time, we ſhould think of anſwering the *Prophet*'s Queſtion, *What haſt thou here? And whom haſt thou here?* What one Foundation proper either to ſettle our Confidence, or engroſs our Affections, while we ſee the whole habitable Globe *is turned and toſſed like a Ball?* The Ground on which we tread is undermined, and ready to burſt under our Feet. 'Tis compoſed of Materials waiting to flame out at the Will of its Maker; and the

the Train is laid for blowing up; whenever, and wherever, *the Breath of the Almighty like a Stream of Brimſtone ſhall kindle it.* And yet what are we doing? This Ball is the Seat, this the Object, of our Pride, our Avarice, or our Ambition. Here we plant, we build, add Houſe to Houſe, City to City; *and think our Dwelling-places ſhall continue for ever.* On this dirty Spot we raiſe Armies, fight Battles; pull down again, ravage and deſtroy by Fire and Sword. Of this rotten Earth we take Handfuls, and call them *Inheritances, Settlements, Securities, Perpetuities.* For ſmall Portions of this is Mankind in Hurry and Project; we labour and turmoil, we lye, we ſwear, we forſwear, we cheat, we ſteal, we pillage, we murder; — we even barter away Eternity, the immortal Soul, for a Trifle, for a Toy.

But ſurely, if Man has any Title to his boaſted Faculty of *Reaſon*; if any of us pay any Regard to Intereſt, Conſcience, or common Senſe; we ſhall think it high Time to come to a better Mind; to form

ſincere Reſolutions of Amendment, ſuch as will be followed by actual Performances:—no longer dare to violate all the Suggeſtions of Reaſon, all the Rules of Morality and Religion; and ſo notriouſly *abuſe this World*, the Stage of our Trial; the Care of which is committed to our Truſt, whereof we muſt *ſoon* give an Account; of whoſe Decay and Tendency to a Diſſolution, *Heaven once, and twice*, and almoſt every Day, *hath ſpoken*; and given ſuch *terrifying*, and therefore *merciful*, Warning.

And now, Lord, what is our Hope? Truly our Hope is even in thee. And that ſuch may be our Truſt under the preſent Circumſtances, I ſhall offer a few Conſiderations both for *Comfort* and *Inſtruction*.

As Firſt; That Men may not be terrified out of their Senſes, as if either the *Enemy* were coming *to take away our Place and Nation*, or that the *End of the World* and final Judgment were immediately coming upon us; — it will appear to every dili-

diligent Obſerver of *Scripture*, that *wicked and Idolatrous Nations* are *principally* marked out as the Objects of judicial Puniſhment, and even *Deſtruction by Fire*. I ſpeak not now of Nations, or particular Perſons, wicked and profligate in other Reſpects, (every Soul of which *God* will one Day judge according to their Works) but I ſpeak of Nations, as they are *the Land of graven Images, and are mad upon their Idols*; which are the *Reſidence and Support of Idolatrous Worſhip*; where the *Public Profeſſion* of Religion is fundamentally *oppoſite* to the Doctrine and Kingdom of *Chriſt*; where the Worſhip of the *true God*, and the Merits of a *Redeemer*, are turned out of Doors, to make Room for *Idols*. Without recurring to the *Old Teſtament*, where we find *Idolatry* to be the *Capital Crime*, and drawing Divine Vengeance both on *Jews* and *Heathens*; we need only conſult the *Revelations of St. John*; which contain a Prophecy of the ſeveral Great Events of the *Church*, from the Time of his *Viſions* till *Time* itſelf *ſhall be no more*. During the Proceſs of theſe Events,

Events, we read in one Place (Ch. ix. 20.) *The reſt of the Men, who were not killed, yet repented not of the Works of their Hands, that they ſhould not worſhip Devils, and Idols of Gold and Silver, of Braſs and Stone, and of Wood.* In another (Ch. xi. 13.) *There was a great Earthquake, and in the Earthquake were ſlain of Men Seven Thouſand; and the Remnant were affrighted, and gave Glory to God.* And *God* grant this may be our Caſe, and of the Nations about us! In a Third, (Ch. xvi. 17.)—which we may preſume is yet to come, *The Seventh,* and laſt *Angel poured out his Vial into the Air;—and there was a great Earthquake, ſuch as was not ſince Men were upon the Earth, ſo mighty an Earthquake and ſo great.* Immediately is added, *Great Babylon* (*Rome Papal*) *came in Remembrance before God.* And in the following *Chapters* we have a pompous Account, how this *Mother of Harlots and Abominations, ſhe who was drunken with the Blood of the Saints, ſhe by whoſe Sorceries all Nations had been deceived, is utter-*

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ly burnt with Fire. After which ſucceeds *a new Heaven and a new Earth,* &c.

And if theſe Prophecies may be thought of *doubtful Interpretation,* as to the Time, the Places, or the Perſons concerned; ſtill it muſt be obſerved, that the *Crime is evidently an Idolatrous Worſhip,* attended with Blood-thirſty *Perſecution.* Juſtly therefore, in the *Form* appointed for this Solemnity, is a *Prayer* inſerted for *all Reformd Proteſtant Churches,* as well as for the particular *Preſervation of this Nation.* And, I humbly truſt, a good *Providence,* which hath hitherto delivered us, will ſtill deliver and protect this *Bulwark of the Reformation,* the Chief Support of the *Proteſtant Religion.*

Again, the ſeveral Devaſtations brought upon the Earth are to be conſidered as ſo many *Preparations,* that make Way for the compleat Eſtabliſhment of the *Glorious Kingdom of our Lord*; both in this World, and a better. The *Sacred Writings* frequently admoniſh us of great *Commotions* in

in Nations, and Diſturbances in Nature; and thoſe not merely as *Signs*, but as neceſſary *Introductions*, of thoſe happy Days. Our *Lord muſt reign, bring his Enemies under his Feet*, by making all *Oppoſition* to fall before him. So that *all Things*, all Diſpenſations, however terrible in Appearance, *will work together for Good to them that love God*; and be deemed Propitious by thoſe, who *wait for the Manifeſtation of his Kingdom.*

When our *Saviour* (who hath interwoven his Predictions of the Deſtruction of *Judæa*, with the Signs of the *Laſt Day*) foretold *upon the Earth Diſtreſs of Nations, with Perplexity, the Sea and the Waves roaring; Mens Hearts failing them for Fear, and for looking after thoſe Things which are coming upon the Earth*; when he foretold *Wars, and Rumours of Wars, and Earthquakes in diverſe Places*, he added likewiſe this Encouragement and Conſolation to his faithful Followers, *Be ye not troubled; look up, and lift up your Heads; for the Time of your Redemption draweth nigh.*

nigh. Under ſuch Diſtreſſes and Deſolations, 'tis indeed ſcarce poſſible but the *beſt* of Men muſt be liable to ſome *Miſgivings and Forebodings of Heart.* But when a little Time is taken for *due Conſideration*, they will ſee and feel, that theſe Events are ſo many Signs and Proofs of the Divine Veracity, Wiſdom, Juſtice, and even Mercy. *God* will be underſtood, in his moſt awful and tremendous Works, as calling forth our Reliance and Truſt in him; as ſetting a Fence about our Duty, placing a Guard upon our Salvation, and bringing it nearer in View for a ſtronger Object of Deſire.

To whatever Miſeries and Diſtractions we are ſubject in this State of Corruption, or to whatever terrible Apprehenſions of the Frame of the Earth being ready to be diſſolved; *St. Paul* in a noble Paſſage (*Rom.* viii. 19.—) hath ſet this great Event in a true and joyful Light. *The earneſt Expectation of the Creature* (the vehement Deſire of the whole *Creation*) *waiteth for the Manifeſtation of the Sons of God.—It was*

made ſubject to Vanity,—in hope of being delivered from the Bondage of Corruption into the glorious Liberty of the Children of God. For we *know that the whole Creation groaneth and travaileth in Pain together until now.* And *not only they, but our ſelves alſo, who have the Firſt-Fruits of the Spirit, grown within our ſelves, waiting for the Adoption, the Redemption of our Bodies.* You ſee *all Nature* is here repreſented as in the *Pangs of Labour*, and waiting for a *happy Delivery:* And the Struggles and Convulſions in the Bowels of the Earth are but ſo many *Proviſions, in the Order of God and Nature, for celebrating the Birth-day of a new World.*

St. Peter (II. Epiſt. Ch. 3.) in his magnificent Deſcription of the *laſt Agonies* of the World by the *general Conflagration*, hath taught us that it was ordained for the ſame Purpoſe, the ſame *final Cauſe*; the neceſſary *Introduction*, the Way of Entrance, into our *Lord's Kingdom.* Which, however dreadful to the Vicious and Unprepared, affords the moſt ſolid Comfort

to

to every ſincere and *pious Chriſtian. The Heavens and the Earth, which now are, are kept in Store, reſerved unto Fire againſt the Day of Judgment, and Perdition of ungodly Men. — But nevertheleſs, we* (all true Belivers,) *according to God's Promiſe, expect new Heavens and a new Earth, wherein dwelleth Righteouſneſs.*

Such are the Declarations and Aſſurances, which a *Faithful Creator and Gracious Redeemer* have provided for every good Chriſtian, for Encouragement and Support, under the otherwiſe moſt tremendous Events. Nor need we aſk, *If the Foundations be caſt down, what ſhall the Righteous do?* How ſhall *he* be preſerved in the common Ruin of all Things, when the whole habitable Globe ſhall be melted into a liquid Fire?—The Divine Promiſe is an infallible Security. And we have full Proof of *God's Power*, by an Inſtance of the *ſame Nature*, in the Prophet *Daniel* (Ch. iii.) where three Eminent Perſons, for refuſing to comply with an *Idolatrous Worſhip*, were *caſt into a burning fiery Fur-*

nace. But as the *Form of one like the Son of God came among them; the Fire had no Power over their Bodies, nor was a Hair of their Head ſinged, nor had the Smell of Fire paſſed on them.*

And that this will be verified in Fact at the End of the World, we are aſſured, by the expreſs Word of St. *Paul* (I. *Theſſ.* iv. 17.—) *We* (all good Chriſtians) *who are alive, and remain unto the Coming of the Lord, ſhall be caught up in the Clouds, to meet the Lord in the Air: and ſo ſhall we ever be with the Lord.*

I doubt I may exceed the uſual Limits of a Diſcourſe. But, on a ſolemn Day of *Faſting and Humiliation*, you will bear with me, while I offer a few Words by way of *Inſtruction*, ſuitable to the preſent, and on ſeveral Accounts critical, Situation, with reſpect to the *Public*, and *Private* Perſons.

And firſt: Experience is ſufficient Proof what Care the *Paſſions* of Men, and the Spirit

Spirit of *Princes*, will take, in fulfilling that Part of our *Lord's Prophecy*, which foretold *Wars, and Rumours of Wars.* And this being a Point, which immediately and ſenſibly toucheth our ſelves; and as we ſee the Fate of the *Nation weighing in the Balance*; it behoveth us to take effectual Care, that we be not *found wanting*; and to conſider well, whether our Vices are not numerous, and heavy enough, to *turn the Scale* againſt us, and bring Deſolation upon our Country. And therefore *Intereſt*, *Duty*, and *Public Authority*, jointly conſtrain us to throw our ſelves at the Feet of the *Almighty*, and beg a "Bleſſing upon his Majeſty's Fleets "and Armies," and *that Iniquity may not be our Ruin.* And becauſe *Prayer for Divine Aſſiſtance* always ſuppoſeth our own beſt *Endeavours*; every Perſon, in his reſpective Rank and Station, is indiſpenſibly obliged to contribute what lyes in his Power, towards the Advancement of true Religion and Virtue, the Safety, Honour, and Welfare of our Sovereign, and his Kingdoms; and without any Kind or Degree

gree of Diſloyalty or Diſaffection, *to Obey and Honour the Defender of the Faith*; the *Principal* Defender upon the Face of the Earth of the *Proteſtant*, that is, the *Chriſtian*, Faith; though it may not be as yet arrived to a State of *Purity and Perfection*. A *different* Behaviour is but promoting the Intereſt of the *Great Apoſtaſy*. Nor can I ever think otherwiſe of any *Attempts, or Deſigns, to ſubvert and alter the Government*, but as ſo many Steps towards *Idolatry*, ſo many Blows at *the Reformation*, and Advances towards the *Worſhip of wooden Gods, and wicked Saints*.

Secondly; with Regard to the Accompliſhment of *other* Parts of your *Lord's Predictions, Earthquakes in diverſe Places, the Sea and the Waves roaring*, &c.— Theſe, you are to conſider, lye wholly at the *Will and Diſpoſition of Providence*. There is no ſaying *Peace and Safety* to our ſelves, or putting any Stop to the *Forerunners of the Lord's Coming*; becauſe no Mortal can ſay to an *Earthquake, hitherto ſhalt thou come, and no farther*; or to the *Sea*,

Sea, here ſhall thy proud Waves be ſtayed. He alone, who hath given them their *Commiſſion*, hath any Right or Power to fix their *Bounds*. And though he hath often brought ſuch *Deſolations upon Earth*; yet within our own Memory, and in our own Days, they come thicker and faſter, with greater Violence, and in a more extenſive Manner;—as ſo many Tokens portending a *nearer Devaſtation* of the whole Earth, and Day of Judgment to enſue. Accordingly theſe Diſpenſations require our intire Submiſſion to the *Will of Heaven*;—an unſhaken *Belief of the Goſpel*; — a thankful Heart for having received theſe *Warnings*; — and a conſtant Endeavour to *ſtrengthen the Things that remain.* We are however to bear in Mind, that it lyeth out of the Reach of *Human Foreſight* and Sagacity to diſcover at *what Diſtance* the End of all Things may be; the *preciſe* Time *of that Day and Hour knoweth no Man.* Nor ought any one, from any *calamitous Appearances*, preſume to *propheſy*, or haſtily to conclude, that the *Great Day of Doom is inſtantly and immediately coming*

ing. [We have *Propheſies and Promiſes in Scripture* of a *purer State of Religion* than the World hath yet known; by the Deſtruction of the Seat of *Anti-Chriſt*, the Reſtoration of the *Jews*, and full Calling of the *Gentiles*; which forbid all raſh and haſty Determinations, *before all theſe Things ſhall be fulfilled.* By what *Means* indeed ſuch a *happy Alteration* ſhall be effected; and whether *ſuddenly* or more *gradually*, or even upon *this Earth* in its preſent Condition; — this is one of the *Secrets belonging to the Lord*; who hath many Ways, unſearchable to us, of bringing his Purpoſes to paſs.] The *Affairs* therefore of the World *muſt* go on: Men muſt attend the Buſineſs of their reſpective *Stations and Imployments.* Duty to our *Families*, and the Nature of *Society*, require this at our Hands. And it is eaſy to conceive what Variety of *Diſtreſſes* and *Confuſions* muſt follow, ſhould any wild Notion of *Chriſt's coming immediately to Judgment* ſo far prevail, as to put a *Stop* to our common Buſineſs and Occupations. *Without theſe cannot a City be inhabited*; and

and all the neceſſary Proviſions for Life and Raiment muſt fail. Wherefore the ſame *Apoſtle*, who hath told us *the Time is ſhort*, hath likewiſe enjoined *every one to abide in his Calling*. But withal a ſtrict Regard to *Honeſty*, a ſteady Principle of *Integrity*, muſt indiſpenſably be obſerved in all our Dealings; — *and ſo much the more, as we ſee the Day approaching*.

Laſtly; Seeing there is no Part of this *material World* that can ſtand the Shock of ſo many Enemies ordained for its *Deſtruction*; and we can form no probable Conjecture *how ſoon* we may fall a *Sacrifice* to any of them; — 'tis of the utmoſt Neceſſity, unleſs we have loſt our Underſtanding, that we provide a Refuge in the *Sanctuary of Heaven*, by a firm and inſeparable Adherence to true *Religion and Virtue*; which amidſt the Ruins and Confuſions of Nature ſtand fixed and immoveable upon their own Bottom, and have the *Rock of Ages* engaged for their Protection.

After *God's late Viſitation*, and ſending abroad his Judgments upon Earth, little will it avail us merely to make it a ſhuddering *Topic of Converſation*,—how Trade will be affected,—what *cauſeth* an Earthquake, *&c.* Light and empty will be our *Humiliation*, in going gravely and ſoberly through the *Ceremony of a Day*, or feeling ſome *ſhort Fit* of Piety and Devotion. It muſt reach to the *Heart and Soul*, and make a ſtrong and *laſting Impreſſion there*; ſuch as will effectually ſecure the One Thing *Valuable*, *the One Thing Neceſſary*.

For however the frail Tenement of our *Bodies*, however the *Earth*, with all its Lumber and Moveables, may be of ſhort Duration, and little Value; yet in their *Uſe and Conſequences* they become of *Infinite Importance*; as they reach through all the Depths of *Eternity*, and our Behaviour here ſhall determine our Condition *for ever*.

'Tis Matter of ſlight Moment, whether we dye a *Natural*, or a *Violent* Death; whether

whether we expire in our *Beds*, or fall by the *Sword*, or are ſwallowed by an *Earthquake*, or are reſerved for the *Great Conflagration*. The only *real* Point of Importance is, whether we are *preparing* our ſelves for *a Perpetuity of Happineſs*, *or a Perpetuity of Miſery*. Nor is the Caſe *alter'd*, whether we come to our End *To-day*, or *To-morrow*; whether final Judgment overtake us *this* Year, or a *Thouſand* Years hence. Sooner, or later, all muſt come to paſs. But for ought we know, the *Judge* of all the Earth may even now be *bringing Juſtice to our Doors*. The *World* itſelf muſt *die*, as well as its Inhabitants. It diſcovereth daily more, and more apparent, Marks of *Old-Age*, with ſelf-evident Proofs of a *ſhattered Conſtitution*. And, what particularly lays Claim to the *Attention of Believers*, our *Lord's Predictions*, and the *Signs* of his Coming, ſeem to be gathering about us, and *haſtening into Accompliſhment*. And yet there is *ſomething within our ſelves* more *perilous*, more to be *feared*, than any the moſt *amazing Prodigies* throughout the World; and that is, — the

heavy Sum of *National Wickedneſs*, which ſeems almoſt to *demand Payment at the Hands of God*. With what a Torrent of *Profane Oaths and Curſes, and Blaſphemies, Drunkenneſs and Debaucheries, Injuſtice and Diſhoneſty, Scoffing and Infidelity, Immoralities and Impieties of all Kinds and Degrees*, are our Streets and Habitations over-run? How *fearful a Thing* is it, in ſuch Circumſtances, *to fall into the Hands of the Living God?* And how melancholy our Proſpect, unleſs the *Prayers and Lives* of Good Perſons prevail for a *Bleſſing*, and be accepted as a *Counter-balance* to the Weight of our Iniquities?

On all Accounts, then, *He that is Righteous, let him be Righteous ſtill; and he that is Holy, let him be Holy ſtill.* His conſtant and unſhaken Perſeverance in Duty, beſides proving him the beſt Friend to *his Country*, will be his *Anchor* and Stay, amidſt all the Commotions and Diſtractions that ſurround him. The moſt violent Shocks in Nature will ſerve to *ſtrengthen and confirm his Faith*; as well as bring forward

forward his *Reward*. But we admoniſh, we hope, and pray, that *he that is Unjuſt, will* not *be Unjuſt ſtill*; nor *he that is Filthy, be Filthy ſtill*; leſt he ſhould be given up to a *Judicial Hardneſs*. For a Man muſt have the Heart of *Pharaoh*, when he refuſeth to be ſoftened and reformed, *nor will let his Sins go*, when *God's repeated Judgments* are upon him. But as nothing within the Compaſs of the *Univerſe* can poſſibly be of *equal Concernment* to any Mortal, as the everlaſting State of his *Soul*; ſo nothing poſſibly can equal the *Folly* of abandoning it to *final Deſtruction*. And the *Profligate* muſt remember, that *Heaven* is wanting in nothing for his Security. *The perpetual Warnings of a kind Father, the ſanctifying Grace of the Spirit, the Atonement of a Saviour*, all jointly call upon him for *Repentance and Amendment*; to make his *Peace with Heaven, before he be ſnatched hence*, and *be no more ſeen*:—*No more ſeen*, till he appear at the Bar of *Judgment*.

Could

Could we but bring ourſelves to ſuch a *Situation*, we ſhould not be *afraid of any evil Tidings*. Then *the Voice of the Lord in the Earthquake would be a glorious Voice*. The *Sword* itſelf would prove a *Mercy*. Then *Wars* may rage, *Nations* may lie in Ruins, and *Empires* be torn from their Foundations; *the Pillars of the Earth may tremble*, and our *World* be batter'd about our Ears: But *God*'s Promiſe of a *Kingdom that cannot be ſhaken* will remain faithful and true. For thus ſaith the *Prophet* (Iſa. li. 6.) *Lift up your Eyes to the Heavens, and look upon the Earth beneath. For the Heavens ſhall vaniſh away like Smoke, and the Earth ſhall wax old as a Garment, and they that dwell therein ſhall die in like Manner: But my Salvation ſhall be for ever, and my Righteouſneſs ſhall not be aboliſhed.*

This is the Way to *Security*, and there is no other. And *here is the Mind that hath Wiſdom.*

St. *Peter*, in Words full of comfortable Doctrine, and ſound Advice, ſhall draw

my

my Concluſion. (Acts iii. 19.—) *Repent ye therefore, and be converted; that your Sins may be blotted out, when the Times of Refreſhing ſhall come from the Preſence of the Lord; and he ſhall ſend Jeſus Chriſt, who before was preached unto you: whom the Heavens muſt receive until the Times of the Reſtitution of all Things; which God hath ſpoken by the Mouth of all his Holy Prophets ſince the World began.*

For which happy Times *God* fit and preſerve us all.

THE END.